



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

BUILDING STRONG®

For Immediate Release:
Dec. 29, 2010

Contact:
Paul Giblin, (540) 678-4944
paul.r.giblin@usace.army.mil

Mayor's office and Corps of Engineers open Kabul's streets to the night

KABUL, Afghanistan – Kabul Mayor Muhammad Yunus Nawandish, U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry's wife Ching Eikenberry, U.S. Army Col. Thomas Magness and other Afghan and U.S. officials flipped a switch at sunset to light up solar-powered streetlights on one of Kabul's most important commercial corridors on Wednesday, Dec. 29.

The streetlight project is part of Nawandish's "Open Kabul's Streets to the Night" initiative. The goal is to boost economic development in downtown Kabul by creating a safer environment for nighttime commerce.

"A solar-light system like this is very important to light the streets," the mayor said through an interpreter during a press conference under one of the streetlights near Jumhoriat National Specialized Hospital. "It is very important for people's lives. The lights make security, the economy, everything much better," he said.

Nawandish thanked the United States and the international community for helping to improve the quality of life in Kabul and throughout Afghanistan. The first 28 streetlights illuminate a nearly 1-kilometer stretch of Jumhoriat Road, which the officials noted is just the first phase of a larger project.

They announced that they are in the planning stages of expanding the program with streetlights along 4.4 kilometers of roads in two more phases in 2012. The proposed routes, distances, costs and schedule:

Phase 1 – Jumhoriat Road, from Jumhoriat National Specialized Hospital to Sherpoor traffic circle, 0.88 kilometers, \$181,000. Completed.

Phase 2 – Foreign Affairs Road, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, connecting to Wazir Akbar Khan Road, past Wazir Akbar Khan Mosque, to Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital, 2.05 kilometers, \$903,000. Expected to be complete in 2012.

Phase 3 – Wazir Akbar Khan Road, from Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital past Massoud and Shahid Abdul Haq traffic circles, to a point near Kabul Stadium, 2.35 kilometers, \$897,000. Expected to be complete in 2012.

The first phase proved that solar-powered lights are a viable option for Kabul, a city that has an inadequate electric grid, said Magness, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' district in northern Afghanistan.



Kabul Mayor Muhammad Yunus Nawandish (front center with gray tie) and U.S. Army Col. Thomas Magness (front right) review plans for additional solar-powered streetlights as members of the Afghan and international media jockey for position just before an outdoor press conference in downtown Kabul on Wednesday, Dec. 29. (Photo by Paul Giblin, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

Much of the capitol city is dark at night following three decades of war that have crippled the city's electrical grid. Each of the streetlights will generate its own power without drawing from Kabul's overall power supply.

"We're confident that we've identified a way ahead," Magness said. "When you hear about the mayor's vision of lighting up the city at night, you realize that renewable energy and this sustainable little effort here could amount to a lot."

Ching Eikenberry, who is a member of a Kabul planning committee headed by the U.S. Agency for International Development, congratulated the mayor and members of his staff for providing leadership and working with the international community to develop the idea.

"I am very, very grateful that I have this opportunity to witness the brightening of the city with my Afghan brothers and sisters," she said.

The stand-alone poles use light-emitting diode lamps that are energy efficient, low maintenance and environmentally friendly. Solar panels collect power during daylight hours to power the lights during nighttime hours. The project also includes training for Kabul public works employees to maintain the lights.

The streetlights, which are 9 meters tall, feature Lithium ion batteries with an expected lifespan of 20 years. The batteries are secured in a locked container on top of the light fixture to prevent tampering. The bulbs within the light fixtures produce 3,500 lumens at street level.

The streetlights produced a clear white light



Kabul Mayor Muhammad Yunus Nawandish (second from left), U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry's wife Ching Eikenberry (center) and U.S. Army Col. Thomas Magness (in uniform) respond to reporters' questions about the solar-powered streetlight program downtown Kabul. (Photo by David Salazar, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

for vehicular and pedestrian traffic on the street that already is a busy business zone lined with shops selling stationary supplies, electronics, photo supplies and other goods.

Magness said he has no doubt residents will be pleased when they find they can walk the street safely when it's lit. "This is just part of a larger vision the mayor has for security, for safety, for commerce that can go on later at night. I think there are a lot of people who will benefit from it," he said.

Officials broke ground on the first phase of the project on Nov. 9 in front of Jumhoriat National Specialized Hospital. The phase was funded through the Commander's Emergency Response Program at Magness' direction.



A row of new solar-powered streetlights illuminate a stretch of busy Jumhoriat Road in downtown Kabul. The lights, which were provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, are part of the mayor's "Open Kabul's Streets to the Night" initiative.
(Photo by David Salazar, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

End